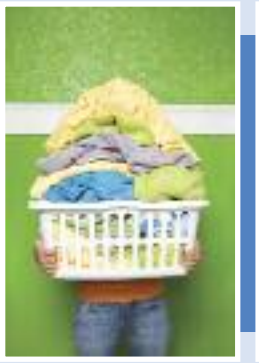
WATERLOO REGION HOUSING

TENANT *Handbook*



Region of Waterloo

A USER'S GUIDE FOR TENANTS

WATERLOO REGION HOUSING

TENANT Handbook

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

CALL 911 IF YOU NEED AMBULANCE, FIRE DEPARTMENT OR POLICE

Waterloo Region Housing **519-575-4800**

Use this number to contact our Kitchener or Cambridge office during office hours: 8:30 to 4:30 p.m., Monday to Friday, except holidays

Maintenance Repairs **519-575-4800**

During office hours **ext. 1200**

Emergency Maintenance Repairs **519-575-4800**

After office hours

Property Manager _____

Property Management Assistant _____

Community Relations Worker _____

Other Contacts _____

TENANT Handbook

Introduction

Welcome to your new home! This Tenant Handbook gives you important information and helps answer some of your questions as you settle into your new community. Inside this Handbook, you can find helpful answers to some frequently asked questions, as well as information about what is expected and required of you as a tenant living in our housing community. We hope you will find this Handbook helpful and encourage you to contact us if you have any questions.

Who we are

Waterloo Region Housing was formed in August of 2000 through the amalgamation of the South Waterloo Housing Authority and the North Waterloo Housing Authority, operating under the Ontario Housing Corporation. Ownership of Waterloo Region Housing was transferred to the Region of Waterloo as Service Manager on January 1, 2001, under the Social Housing Reform Act, (2000).

About Waterloo Region Housing

Waterloo Region Housing manages 2,723 affordable rental housing units that are owned by the Region of Waterloo and the Region of Waterloo Community Housing Inc. These units, which are located in Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo, and in the townships of Woolwich and Wellesley, include low and high-rise apartment buildings, townhouses, semi-detached and single family homes. Units range in size from bachelor apartments to 5-bedroom homes, with some units being accessible for individuals with disabilities.

Waterloo Region Housing is committed to serving the tenants we house and to the principle that, together, we can succeed in building positive communities.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns during your tenancy, you can contact Waterloo Region Housing anytime by calling 519-575-4800.

Our office locations are:

235 King St. E., 6th Floor
Kitchener, ON N2G 4N5
Fax: 519-893-8447

150 Main St.
Cambridge, ON N1R 8H6
Fax: 519-740-5957

www.region.waterloo.on.ca/housing

Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, except for holidays.

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MOVING IN

Welcome to your new home! We hope you enjoy it.

Move-in Inspections

Your unit was inspected before you moved in. Damage to the unit was written down and work orders for needed repairs were given. But, it is possible that we may have overlooked something. We have therefore included a Move-In Inspection Report with your Tenant Handbook. We ask that you complete and return the Move-In Inspection Report to your Property Manager **within 10 days** of moving in. If you do not return the Move-In Inspection Report, that will be your way of saying to us that the unit is in good condition and that *no repairs are needed*.

Please inspect everything as soon as you move in, such as doors, ceilings, walls, windows, screens, etc. Check to make sure that the light fixtures, plumbing fixtures, appliances, and all electrical plugs are working.

Keys

The keys that you were given when you moved in will get you into your unit, the front door of your building (if you live in an apartment building) and your mailbox. Keys to these locks are only available through our office. They cannot be duplicated in a store. Because we want to make sure our tenants are safe, locks are always changed when a former tenant does not give back all the keys that s/he was given.

If you lose or forget your keys during our business hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), please contact your Property Manager or other office staff for help.

If you lose or forget your keys after business hours, you will have to pay a fee to have staff open your door. If there is a Keyholder living in your building, you may not have to pay for the service. But, for your own convenience, **it is a good idea to have an extra key available with a friend or family member.**

Parking

There is not a lot of tenant and visitor parking at Waterloo Region Housing sites, so we ask that you only park in your assigned parking space. If you need a parking space, please contact your Property Manager or Property Management Assistant. If you need one more parking space, please check with your Property Manager for availability.

Decorating

We understand that you may want to decorate your home in your style to make it feel like your own. You can do this but, when you move out, the unit must be restored to its original move-in condition, meaning it has to look the way it did when you moved in. This could cost you money if you cannot do the work on your own. For example, you may have to pay a fee if staff or contractors have to take down light fixtures, shelving, wallpaper, and so on.

You may want to paint the inside of your unit to add some colour to your walls. But, keep in mind that if you paint a bright or dark colour, you must paint the walls in an off-white or light colour

when you move out. Wallpaper must also be taken down before you move out. Painting, staining or changing the outside of your building in any way is not allowed.

You also cannot make any permanent changes to your home. For example, do not replace floors or take down doors. You must get written permission from your Property Manager if you would like to install carpet, tile, or make any other significant changes.

Please check with your Property Management Assistant *before you decorate or install anything* if you are not sure about what you can and cannot do.

YOUR COMMUNITY

Groups and Social Clubs

Waterloo Region Housing, Acting Together, Supporting and Understanding People, known as "WHATS UP", is the Tenant Committee formed by Waterloo Region Housing. WHATS UP has existed in different forms since 1991 and is the product of many years of working with tenants throughout Waterloo Region.

Currently, WHATS UP facilitates community safety education, improvement of services to tenants, advice on strategic directions, and effective communication to help advance the successful operation of Waterloo Region Housing.

We encourage you to join the Tenant Committee or any social groups in your community. Volunteer members help empower residents to strengthen their communities through active participation in matters that affect them.

Tenant groups plan and host social and recreational programs for residents and give residents an opportunity to tell Waterloo Region Housing and other public organizations about their concerns.

The following Community Centres/Organizations get support from Waterloo Region Housing and other community partners. You can contact them at the numbers listed:

CAMBRIDGE

Southwood Community Centre
241 Southwood Dr.
519-621-2930

Christopher-Champlain Community Centre
125 Champlain Blvd.
519-740-8565

Langs Farm Village Association
887 Langs Dr.
519-653-1182

Greenway-Chaplin Community Centre
116 Rouse Ave.
519-623-4220

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KITCHENER

Courtland-Shelley Community Centre
1064-G Courtland Ave.
519-571-7953

Paulander Community Centre
60 Paulander Dr., Unit 1
519-741-1152

WATERLOO

Sunnydale Community Centre
514C Sunnydale Pl.
519-883-0410

YOUR RENT

We ask that you read this section on rent very carefully, and that you contact your Property Management Assistant if you have any questions at all. Please do not risk your tenancy by not paying your rent or paying your rent late.

About Your Rent

Most Waterloo Region Housing tenants pay a monthly rent that is geared to the household's total monthly income, before deductions.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance is the financial subsidy given to a household to lower the amount the household must otherwise pay to live in a unit with Waterloo Region Housing. RGI rent, plus or minus a utility allowance, is based on approximately 30% of the household's gross monthly income. Please contact your Property Management Assistant if you need more information on this.

Paying Your Rent

Your rent is due on or before the 1st of every month.

To make sure that your rent is always paid on time, we highly recommend that you set up either a pre-authorized or direct payment plan if you have a fixed income (e.g. pensions, steady employment, or Social Assistance). For more information about the pre-authorized payment plan, please speak to your Property Management Assistant.

You can also make rent payments through your bank's website, branch, Automated Teller Machine (ATM) or telephone system. If you have access to the internet, go to www.region.waterloo.on.ca and click on "Doing Business", "Payment Options".

We also accept debit, cheques, post-dated cheques and cash payments.

Waterloo Region Housing's rent collection policy can be viewed in person at one of our office locations, or on the Region of Waterloo's website at **www.region.waterloo.on.ca/housing**

Changes to your Rent or Household Income

As mentioned earlier, the amount of rent you pay is based on your total household income: the amount of income you get and anyone else that lives in the unit with you. As well, the number of bedrooms you qualify for is based on the number of people living in your home. Because of this, there are some very important rules you need to understand.

Because your rent is based on your household's total monthly income, the amount of rent you pay may change if your household income changes. You must tell your Property Management Assistant about any changes to your household income, or changes to the source of your income (where it comes from) **within 30 days of the change.**

You must also contact your Property Management Assistant **within 30 days**, in writing, if a member of your household moves out. This is because the number of bedrooms you qualify for is based on the number of people living in your home. If someone moves out, you may be 'overhoused' and have to move into a smaller unit. If you would like to add a new person to your household, you must speak to your Property Manager and/or Community Relations Worker, fill out the necessary paperwork and get permission from Waterloo Region Housing **before** someone moves in.

Once a year, we do a review to make sure that your household still qualifies for 'rent-geared-to-income' Community Housing. We check your household income, but we also check to make sure that your household still meets the basic eligibility requirements for Community Housing. This includes checking your residency status and the number of people living in your household. If your rent will change (go up or down), you will be told about it in a rent change decision letter that we will send you by mail.

Do not wait for your annual review to tell us about changes! Failing to tell us about changes may mean that you will have to pay money to us or that you will lose your rent subsidy. Do not risk your tenancy. Remember to contact us.

YOU AND YOUR NEW HOME

This section of the Handbook answers some of the questions that you will naturally have when moving into your new community, and gives you some of the do's and don'ts that you need to know about. If you ever have any questions, please contact your Property Manager.

Laundry

All Waterloo Region Housing apartment complexes have laundry machines that tenants can use. Please take out your laundry from the washer and dryer as soon as it is done so that other tenants can do their laundry too. If you have problems with the laundry machines, call the laundry contractor for help at the phone number posted in the laundry room.

If you live in an apartment, you are not allowed to install a washer and dryer in your unit, because they could cause flooding and/or other plumbing problems.

Installing a washer and dryer is allowed if you live in a townhouse or a single/semi-detached home. You will find the hook-ups for these in your basement. In wheelchair accessible units, hook-ups can be found on the main floor.

Garbage

For apartment buildings . . .

- Put all garbage in small, securely tied plastic bags before you drop them down the garbage chute. Bags must be small enough to fit into the chute.
- Do not put glass, items under pressure (e.g. aerosol cans), or pizza boxes down the chute. These types of items must be taken directly to the garbage room.
- Double bag garbage that has kitty litter or diapers.
- Do not leave garbage bags in hallways, garbage chute rooms or on your balcony.
- Make sure you push the bag down the chute and that the chute door is closed all the way.
- In buildings where there are garbage cans, make sure you put the garbage can lid back on after you put your garbage in it.
- Large household items, like mattresses, sofas and appliances, are not allowed in the garbage bins. You will need to take these large items to the landfill yourself, or call a pickup business to take them away for you. You may have to pay a fee for pickup.

For townhouse & single/semi-detached units . . .

- Make sure that garbage is put in garbage bins (where provided). If the garbage bin is full, store your garbage as described below until the bin is emptied.
- In communities where there is curb-side pickup, put all garbage in securely tied plastic bags and put the bags out by the curb no earlier than 7 p.m. the night before. After pickup, put away garbage bins and recycling boxes (blue boxes) as soon as you can.
- Garbage bins should be kept in your backyard/patio area only – not in your front yard.
- In certain municipalities, curbside pickup of large items may be available. You can contact customer service at the Region of Waterloo's Waste Management Division at 519-883-5100 for information on the availability of large item disposal in your area. Otherwise, you may be charged a fee if you leave large items by the curb.

Hazardous waste

If you need to get rid of hazardous waste, like needles, paint, paint thinner and batteries, it is your responsibility to make arrangements.

Remember that needles must be disposed of properly for safety reasons. Please contact your doctor or pharmacist for safe disposal instructions. Customer service at the Region of Waterloo's Waste Management Division at 519-883-5100 may be contacted for information on hazardous waste disposal.

Recycling

We encourage you to take part in the green bin, blue bin or blue box recycling program in your community. If you live in an apartment complex, your Property Manager will tell you where to find the blue bins/boxes. If you live in a townhouse or single/semi-detached home, and you do not know where to find the bins/boxes, please contact your Property Manager.

Pets

In many households, pets are important members of the family. If you have a pet, please remember that you are responsible for your pet's behaviour and its effect on the building and other tenants.

Dogs must always be on a leash when outside. Waterloo Region Housing enforces provincial and municipal bylaws concerning pets, including a "stoop and scoop" policy in all of our communities. We ask that you be mindful of local bylaws, because you may have to pay a fine if you fail to follow them. Please do not let repeated problems put your tenancy at risk!

Accessibility

Waterloo Region Housing apartment buildings are wheelchair accessible. We also have some modified units in our seniors' communities that are designed for wheelchair access.

Insurance

Our buildings are insured by the Region of Waterloo, but this insurance does not cover your personal property. All tenants are strongly encouraged to have Tenant Liability and Content Insurance to cover any damages to their personal property and to protect themselves in the event of liability issues. It is very important to have Tenant Insurance so that you are covered for damages in case there is a flood (water or sewer) or fire in your unit. Also, you will be held responsible for damages that are found to be caused by you or your guests.

Common Areas

Recreation Rooms

Most of the Waterloo Region Housing apartment buildings have a recreation room that tenants can use. If you would like to book this room for a private event (for example, a birthday party), you have to contact your Property Manager, in writing. You should do this six weeks before your scheduled event to make sure the room is available. Cleanup of the room after the event is your responsibility — not the responsibility of the Property Manager or staff.

Elevators

Elevators are a safe and important part of apartment living. Unfortunately, elevators sometimes stop working. Here are a few ways that you can help to reduce elevator problems:

- Do not hold doors open for long periods of time.
- Do not kick the doors or block the doors with any objects to 'hold' the elevator. If you would like to place the elevator on service, please contact the Keyholder or your Property Manager.
- If the elevator door is not closing, check for anything that could be blocking it, like debris on the tracks.
- If the elevator is damaged or not working, please call us immediately at 519-575-4800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- If the elevator stops between floors, there is a telephone/intercom system in the elevator that lets you call for help. Press the intercom button. Stay calm. Do not try to get out of the elevator before it comes back to the floor level. Once the button has been pushed, wait for someone on the other end of the line to talk to you.
- If you find that someone is stuck in an elevator, try to keep them calm by talking to them and let them know that help is on the way. **If you think medical attention is required, call 911.**

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Pest Control

Unfortunately, pests can become a problem in any household. To control this problem, staff and tenants need to work together. Please make sure that food is kept in airtight containers, and that garbage is kept in bins with lids on and put out on regular garbage days. We ask that you contact our maintenance line at 519-575-4800, extension 1200, and/or your Property Manager to tell us about pest infestation as soon as it is noticed, so that pest control services can be contacted immediately.

We also ask that you do not feed birds, squirrels or stray animals, because this may attract unwanted pests to your building.

Unit Exteriors

Waterloo Region Housing does not allow for antennae, clotheslines, basketball nets, etc. to be attached to the exterior of units. If you have any questions about this, please contact your Property Management Assistant.

Installing a satellite dish may be allowed if you live in a single, semi-detached or row housing unit. But, you must first contact your Property Manager for approval. Your Property Manager will let you know which steps you need to take before you can install the satellite dish.

If you have a balcony:

Balconies can be great for enjoying those warm summer days and evenings, and we encourage you to put out patio chairs and table planters. But, there are some rules that you must follow for safety reasons. Please help keep our communities safe for everyone by following these rules:

- Balconies should not be used as a storage area. Materials may blow off the balcony, or children may climb on objects and fall off the balcony.
- Carpet is not allowed on the balcony because it makes the concrete deteriorate quickly.
- You may hang planters on the inside of the balcony railing, but please make sure that they are securely hung. Planters are not allowed to hang over the balcony railing.
- Barbequing is not allowed on your balcony for fire safety reasons under local municipal bylaws. Also, propane tanks may not be kept on the balcony.
- Sweeping dirt off of or throwing anything (for example, water) off a balcony is not allowed.

Lawns and Walkways

For single/semi-detached homes and townhouse tenants . . .

Waterloo Region Housing has an annual Garden Competition, and many tenants take a lot of pride in keeping well-maintained yard and garden areas. We completely understand that not everyone has 'green thumbs', but there are some things we expect of you:

- If you live in a single/semi-detached home or a townhouse community, you are responsible for keeping your area neat and orderly. Please rake the leaves, mow and water the lawn, and weed your yard and garden area.
- During the winter months, Waterloo Region Housing is responsible for clearing snow and salting all common walkways, parking lots and roadways. But, getting rid of snow and ice from your walkway, driveway and around your car is your responsibility.

If someone is hurt because they have fallen on your walkway or driveway, you can be held responsible. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you get renters/tenant insurance to reduce your liability.

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Your Lease

Your lease explains your rights and responsibilities as a tenant, and we ask that you read it very carefully. Your lease protects you as the tenant and the Region of Waterloo (Waterloo Region Housing) as the landlord. If you have any questions about your lease, please contact your Property Manager.

Transferring to a Different Unit

Sometimes, Waterloo Region Housing tenants may want to transfer to a different unit, either in the building/community they currently live in or in another location. Some reasons for this can be because of health or family, or because of a change in family size. Transferring to another Waterloo Region Housing unit is known as an 'internal transfer'.

You may be eligible for an internal transfer if you have:

- paid your rent on time for at least six months; and
- you have lived at your current address for at least one year (this does not apply to overhoused households).

Waterloo Region Housing's Transfer Policy is available for viewing at both of our office locations and on the Region of Waterloo website at **www.region.waterloo.on.ca/housing.**

If you are eligible for a transfer, you must complete the required transfer forms and give them to your Community Relations Worker (CRW), who will also help you with any questions you may have. You can call us at 519-575-4800 to get a copy of the transfer forms or to talk to your CRW. After we have received your forms and reviewed them, you will then get a letter from us to let you know if your transfer request has been approved or denied. If your transfer request is approved, you will be placed in chronological order (first come, first served) on the Waterloo Region Housing transfer waiting list. If your transfer request is denied, and you do not agree with our decision, you may ask for an internal review.

Transferring to a unit that is managed by another housing provider (not Waterloo Region Housing) is called an 'external transfer'. If this is what you would like to do, you must fill out an application for the Region's main waiting list for community housing. Please contact your CRW for more information on how to apply for an external transfer.

Internal Review

Under the Social Housing Reform Act, (2000), you have the right to an Internal Review if you are unhappy with certain decisions that have been made by Waterloo Region Housing. You must write to our office and ask for the review within 10 days of getting notice of the decision. You can ask us for a review if you believe:

- We have based a rent subsidy decision on incorrect information;
- We have not calculated your rent subsidy or housing charge correctly;
- Your rent subsidy was discontinued without appropriate cause;
- Your request for a transfer has been unfairly refused; or
- You have been wrongly asked to move to another unit because you are overhoused (e.g. fewer people in your unit than the rules allow).

Guest Policy

You are welcome to have friends or family stay overnight or for short periods of time (for example, one week).

Waterloo Region Housing's Guest Policy is available for viewing at both of our office locations, and on the Region of Waterloo's website at **www.region.waterloo.on.ca/housing.**

You cannot have any guest stay in your home for more than 14 days in a row without getting permission first from Waterloo Region Housing. If you would like for your guest to stay longer, you will need to ask us, in writing, and then wait for us to give you written permission. This must be done before your guest comes. If it does not, you may lose your rent subsidy assistance. Your home is meant to only house those people who are listed on your lease. Please contact your Property Manager if you have any questions.

Damages & Chargebacks

It is your responsibility to make sure that your visitors and guests comply with the rules and regulations of your housing community.

It is important for you to understand that if you, your family or your guests damage property, you will have to pay the cost to repair or replace it. This cost may include staff time. Staff will look at the condition and age of the damaged property when assessing the chargeback. For damage to smaller items, such as broken door stops or broken light shades, you may choose to do your own repairs. Damage to window screens is your responsibility, but you should talk to your Property Manager about any damages to other, bigger items.

No Smoking Bylaw

The Region of Waterloo has a No Smoking Bylaw. It is illegal to smoke in public areas of your building, such as hallways. Please be considerate of your neighbours and smoke only five metres away from any windows, entrances and exits. Please read the 'Smoke-Free Policy' section below.

Smoke-Free Policy

Starting April 1, 2010, a Smoke-Free Policy is in effect for tenants who live in Regionally owned Community Housing units. New or transferred tenants who move into their unit after that date, their guests and visitors must follow this Policy and will not be allowed to smoke or hold lit tobacco or similar products inside their unit, on their balcony or patio. By law, existing tenants who have signed their lease before that date will be 'grandfathered' (exempt) from this Policy and can still choose to smoke inside their unit and on their balcony or patio for as long as they live in that unit.

When smoking or holding lit tobacco or similar products outside the building, both new and existing tenants must be at least five metres away from any windows, entrances and exits.

As we gradually move toward a smoke-free building, your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Because smoking will still be allowed in "grandfathered" units, there is a risk of second-hand smoke travelling from one unit to another through doorways, windows, patios, etc. and, as a result, we will follow up on any complaints that we receive about second-hand smoke. Please be mindful of others.

For information or help on how to stop smoking, please call the Region of Waterloo's Public Health tobacco information line at 519-883-2279; or, you can also call the Smoker's Helpline at 1-877-513-5333.

Eviction

Eviction is always a last resort. Your unit is your home and our goal is to help you keep your home. If you have a problem paying your rent on time, please tell us right away and we will try to work with you to find a solution.

The Residential Tenancies Act gives the following grounds for eviction:

You may be evicted if you:

- Do not pay your rent on time
- Frequently pay your rent late
- Have more people living in the unit than health, safety, or housing standards allow
- Give false information about your income, the income of other family members living in a rent-geared-to-income unit, or about the number of people living in your home

You may be evicted if you or your guests:

- Cause serious damage to your unit, the building, or the residential complex
- Make noise or act in a way that seriously bothers any other tenant or the landlord
- Threaten the safety of another tenant or the landlord
- Break the law on Waterloo Region Housing's property

You may be evicted if you keep a pet that:

- Hurts someone
- Causes damage and you do not pay the cost of repair when asked to do so
- Makes an unreasonable amount of noise or is an unreasonable nuisance
- Disturbs the reasonable enjoyment of the other tenants or the landlord (e.g. not picking up after your pet)

NOTE: this section is not intended to be legal advice. For legal assistance, you can contact Waterloo Region Community Legal Services at 519-743-0254.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

For all medical and fire emergencies, call 911

For building and unit-related emergencies, you can contact Waterloo Region Housing, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at 519-575-4800.

Apartment Building Keyholder Tenant

The Keyholder is a tenant who lives in the apartment building and is responsible for checking the building, allowing contractors to enter units where permission is granted, showing units to prospective tenants, and reporting emergencies to Waterloo Region Housing. Not all buildings have Keyholder tenants. For help after office hours, please call Waterloo Region Housing at 519-575-4800. If your apartment complex has a Keyholder tenant, and Waterloo Region Housing feels that the Keyholder tenant can help you, we will contact this person.

Smoke Detectors/Alarms

For your safety, your unit has one or more smoke alarms. Your smoke alarm will be tested and cleaned once a year. But, it is recommended that you test and carefully vacuum around your smoke detector every month. If you think that your smoke alarm is not working properly, please contact Waterloo Region Housing at 519-575-4800.

Never disconnect your smoke alarm. It is a Provincial offence to tamper with a smoke alarm.

Electricity and Water

Electric appliances and water can be a lethal combination. If an appliance falls into a sink or tub of water, or if you touch an appliance with wet hands or while standing in water, you risk severe electric shock and possibly death.

- Never use any electric appliances - radios, TVs, hair dryers, etc. - near sinks, toilets or bathtubs.
- Always dry your hands before touching electric appliances.
- Keep the floor around your washer and dryer clean and dry.

Building Safety and Security

The security of your building and community depends a lot on the steps you take to ensure your own safety and the safety of your fellow tenants.

Below are some steps you can take to make sure your building/community is safe:

- Always keep hallways clear of items, like scooters, wheelchairs, walkers, boot trays and doormats. This will help emergency workers and cleaning staff.
- Always close and lock your apartment/unit and building doors.
- When you use the intercom system, ask the caller to identify him or herself so that "uninvited" persons cannot get into the building or your unit.
- Do not let salespersons or canvassers (exemptions are Stats Canada Canvassers or Election Canvassers) into your building. Waterloo Region Housing does not allow soliciting in apartment buildings. Salespeople may say they are Region of Waterloo employees or say they have permission from the Region to get into your building. Always ask anyone you do not know for identification, including those who say they are an employee or contractor with the Region of Waterloo.
- If someone you do not know is trying to get into the building, do not let them in. Ask them to use the intercom to contact the person they want to visit.
- If you plan to be away from your home for a long period of time, tell the office, Keyholder, post office, newspaper office and all other routine delivery people. Remember to close and lock all of your doors and windows before you leave. You may want to use window locking devices for additional security.
- Do not take out window screens, because this makes unwanted entry easier.

Fire Safety

An important note to tenants who live in apartment buildings:

You should NEVER disconnect your apartment door closer. The door closer is a critical fire safety device, and we ask that you tell us about any problems with your door closer. Tenants who disconnect or tamper with their door closer may risk their tenancy as it is an offence under the Ontario Fire Code.

If you discover a fire:

- Leave fire area immediately
- Do not use elevators; take the stairs
- Close door in fire area but do NOT lock it
- Pull the nearest fire alarm station
- Confirm the alarm/emergency by phoning 911 from a safe location

When the fire alarm sounds:

- Stop what you are doing
- Feel your apartment door for heat
- To check corridor for smoke, stand behind door and open very slowly
- If corridor is clear, close apartment door, and exit using the stairway - do NOT try to use elevators
- If there is smoke in the stairway, use a different stairway

For Apartment Buildings:

If smoke is heavy in the hallway outside your apartment door, it may be safer to stay in your apartment. If so:

- Stay calm
- Keep your apartment door closed but not locked
- Put a wet towel at the bottom of door; tape around the door if you can
- Call 911
- Wait on your balcony or by large living room window
- Wave to emergency workers to let them know where you are

For Townhouse Communities & Single/Semi-Detached Homes:

- Plan an escape route with your family in advance and decide on a meeting place outside your home
- Stay calm
- Get out of your home as quickly as possible
- Meet family in predetermined area
- Call 911

Help save your life and the life of others. Plan ahead and never disconnect fire safety equipment, such as smoke alarms and door closers. Tampering with Life Safety devices is an offence under the Ontario Fire Code.

MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

Unit Inspections Every Two Years

Waterloo Region Housing Staff will sometimes inspect your unit. This is usually done once every two years. We check on the condition of your unit and make sure your appliances, heating, plumbing and safety devices are working.

Instead of waiting for your unit inspection, we ask that you tell us about any maintenance problems as soon as possible. Your help in early detection of maintenance problems is greatly appreciated.

Maintenance Emergencies

The following are examples of maintenance emergencies:

- There is no heat, electricity, or water in your unit
- There is a water leak or flood in your unit
- Your toilet is plugged and you only have one washroom
- Your basement sewer drain is flooding

If you have a maintenance emergency, call our receptionist at 519-575-4800 anytime and say what type of emergency you are having.

Please remember that if you have a maintenance emergency that can potentially cause a lot of damage to the building or unit[s]), staff do not have to give notice before coming into your home.

Non-emergency Repairs

If you need repairs to your unit that are not considered an emergency, you can call us at 519-575-4800, extension 1200, or fill out a Maintenance Request Form at one of our offices. Please tell us if you are giving us permission to come into your home to do the repairs when you are not at home, or if you want to have someone at home when we come. Also, we ask that you tell us about any pet(s) that may greet us when we come into your home.

Your maintenance request will be acknowledged within 48 hours, and typically, most repairs will be done within 14 days. If the repairs will take longer or cannot be done for some reason, staff will let you know.

BASIC MAINTENANCE INSTRUCTIONS FOR YOUR HOME

No Heat? Check this list first before you call.

- Have you checked to make sure that the furnace power switch is in the ON position? You will find the furnace power switch near the furnace, either high on the wall or on the basement ceiling. It is similar to a light switch.
- Check that the furnace filter is clean. As a tenant, you are responsible for changing the furnace filter once a month. On most furnaces, the filter slides out where the cold air duct work returns to the bottom of the furnace.
- Check the fuse or circuit breaker. It can be found in the main electrical panel of your home.
- Turn your thermostat down all the way, wait a minute, and then turn it up to a temperature that is warmer than the room temperature.
- Make sure that your warm air registers and cold air returns are free of any items that could restrict air circulation.
- If your heating system fails to work, call us at 519-575-4800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Safety Hint: Always ensure that there is a 3 foot clearance around furnaces and water heaters.

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Appliances

If an appliance does not work, check first to be sure that it is plugged in. Also, check the circuit breaker and fuses that serve the appliance's circuit to make sure that it hasn't tripped or blown. If you own the appliance that is not working, you are responsible for repairing it. If the appliance is owned by Waterloo Region Housing, please call our maintenance line at 519-575-4800, extension 1200.

We recommend using appliances that have the Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (ULC/UL) symbol. This symbol shows that the product has been safety-tested.

Electric Baseboard Heaters

Putting things in front of or on top of baseboard heaters and vents can be a fire hazard and can also stop the heating system from working properly. We therefore ask that you keep all flammable materials away from heating sources. For example:

- Do not hang clothes to dry on or near your heater or heating vents.
- Do not put furniture and blankets close to heaters.

Water Shutoff – Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Individual shutoff valves are found on some sinks and most toilets. They are generally located under the sink at the supply tubes feeding the taps. Turn the valve clockwise to stop water flow, then open a faucet or flush the toilet to let out water standing in the lines. Do not flush the toilet if your toilet is already overflowing.
2. If you live in a townhouse of single/semi-detached home, the main shutoff valve is usually found in the basement near the water meter, and it can be closed to shut off all water in your home. Open faucets at the highest and lowest points in your home to drain water lines.

Water Shutoff – Tips and Techniques

When you are turning off the water at sink, tub, toilet, or at the main shutoff, please be careful not to turn the handles too hard. You can break the valve stem inside the shutoff valve.

Before you turn off the water, or if you get a notice telling you that the water will be off for maintenance work, try to plan ahead. If the water will be off for several hours, you may want to fill a sink, bathtub or a few buckets so you will have water available.

Outdoor Tap – Winter Shutoff

If you live in a townhouse of single/semi-detached home, you will need to shut off the outside tap when the weather starts getting colder late in the fall. The valve to do this is usually found in the basement ceiling area close to where your tap is. When shutting this valve off, it is best to open the outside tap, so *just a little water is flowing,* and then shut off the inside valve. This will allow any water that is left in the line between the outside faucet and the shutoff valve to drain completely, preventing a burst pipe because of frozen water in the line.

Clogged Toilets – Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Get a plunger and place the cup over outlet opening at the bottom of the toilet bowl (hint: a flanged plunger works best on toilets).

2. Pour enough water into bowl to cover rubber cup.
3. Plunge down and up rapidly, but be careful because some water will splash.
4. Pour a bucket of water into the bowl. If the water passes through, flush toilet a few times to help wash debris through drain.
5. If a plunger does not seem to help, you may choose to use a hand-operated 'drain snake' instead. A 'drain snake' is an inexpensive tool that can usually be found at any hardware store.
6. Some blockages are not easily cleared. If this happens, you can call us at 519-575-4800. A reminder that only waste and toilet paper should be flushed down a toilet. If we find that the blockage is from something other than waste or toilet paper that you, or someone in your home, flushed down the toilet, you may have to pay for the cost of the plumbing call.

Toilets – Water Conservation

- Sometimes the water in a toilet will start to run all the time. This can be because of a float arm that does not rise high enough, a float ball that has become waterlogged, a tank stopper (flapper) that does not sit in the outlet valve properly, or an inlet valve that does not shut off.
- Sometimes, by just reaching into the bottom area of the tank and resetting the tank flapper valve (the water in the tank is clean tap water), the running water will stop. You can also try to adjust the float arm or tighten the plastic screw found on top of the inlet valve.
- If you try these tips, but the toilet or any other tap in your home is still running water constantly, please call us at 519-575-4800, extension 1200, to report the problem.

Electricity Tips

Know where your home's main electric switch is, so you can turn off the electric supply to your entire home quickly in case of an emergency.

Cords

For safety reasons:

- Do not put electric cords under rugs, where they can be walked on, or in a place where you cannot see if they are damaged.
- Check for cords that are broken, frayed, damaged, tied in knots, or that have melted insulation. Unplug and get rid of them immediately.
- Extension cords should only be used as a temporary measure.
- Insert and remove plugs by grabbing onto the plug itself, but be careful not to let your fingers touch the metal prongs. Removing a plug from a receptacle by pulling on the cord will damage it.
- Use power bars and avoid overloading circuits.

Fuses, or circuit breakers

- Know where your circuit breaker or fuse box is.
- Know the correct sizes of any fuses needed in your home and make sure you have spares. Blown fuses must be replaced, not repaired. Never bypass or replace a fuse with one of higher amperage.
- If a fuse or circuit breaker blows, disconnect or turn off the appliance(s) that may have caused the problem.
- Reset the circuit breaker, after disconnecting the item/appliance that may have caused the problem, by pushing it all the way to the 'off' position, then to the 'on' position. If the overload is cleared, the electricity will come back on.
- Shut off the main electric switch before replacing a fuse.
- If your circuit breakers trip off or the fuse blows again, there could be a problem with some of the other appliances or devices on that circuit. Make sure all appliances, lamps or devices are unplugged and try again.
- If the circuit breaker still trips off or if the fuse blows again, please call us at 519-575-4800.

MOVING OUT

The Province's Residential Tenancies Act says that if you want to move out of your unit, you must give **at least 60 days written notice**. The last day of the notice must be the last day of the month. For example, if you want to move out on August 31st, you must give your written notice no later than June 30th. We ask that you send your notice, in writing, to the attention of your Property Manager, or complete a "notice to vacate" form at one of our office locations. When we get your notice to vacate, we will send you a letter to confirm your responsibilities, and your Property Manager will setup a pre-move-out inspection.

Remember to contact all utility companies (where applicable) to let them know about your move-out date, so they can prepare the final bills.

COMMUNITY CONTACTS

Bell Canada	519-310-2355
Community Care Access Centres, Waterloo Region	519-748-2222
Grand River Transit Information	519-585-7555
KW Multicultural Centre	519-745-2531
Lutherwood's Rent Bank and Eviction Prevention Program	519-743-2460
Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal	1-888-332-3234
Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)	519-886-4700
Ontario Works (OW)	519-883-2100
Rogers Cable TV	1-888-764-3771
The Community Outreach Information Line	519-883-2290
Waterloo Region Community Legal Services	519-743-0254
YMCA Cambridge Immigrant Services	519-621-1621

Utilities

Cambridge and North Dumfries Hydro	519-621-3484
Kitchener-Wilmot Hydro Inc.	519-743-3600
Waterloo North Hydro Inc. (Waterloo, Woolwich and Wellesley)	519-885-6840
Kitchener Utilities	519-741-2626
Union Gas	1-888-774-3111
Union Energy	1-888-718-6466

Waterloo Region District School Boards

Public	519-570-0003
Catholic	519-578-3660

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Thank you for reading this information guide!
We want your stay in your new home to be a positive experience,
and we encourage you to contact us if you have any questions.
We also welcome your suggestions as we work to continuously improve this
Tenant Handbook. Please contact the Coordinator, Tenant Services
at 519-575-4800 with your comments.

THANK YOU!

Region of Waterloo

The Sunnyside Seniors Apartments were built by the Region of Waterloo and were fully occupied in June of 2004. This is one of many new housing developments being funded by the Region of Waterloo through its Affordable Housing Strategy.

Region of Waterloo

PLANNING, HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

Housing

Rob Horne, Commissioner